

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, TW

SUBJECT: ROC IMPORT DUTIES ON ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES: LAI FU

TRADING CO. CASE

REF: (A) STATE 193409 (B) TAIPEI 5442 (C) STATE 254834

1. AS REPORTED REF (B), THE EMBASSY TOOK UP THE QUESTION OF ROC DUTIES ON ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES WITH KEY GROG OFFICIALS AS INSTRUCTED REF (A). CHARLES REHFELDT WAS TOLD OF OUR INSTRUCTIONS FROM WASHINGTON AND HAS BEEN KEPT CURRENTLY INFORMED OF OUR REPRESENTATIONS ON HIS BEHALF, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE NOT PRODUCED THE RESULTS HE DESIRED (THE DUTY RATES ON ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES, HOWEVER HAVE NOT BEEN INCREASED).

2. REHFELDT'S MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR UNGER REFERRED TO IN REF (B) INVOLVED NO MORE THAN CEREMONIAL HANDSHAKE GREETING; NEITHER PARTY RAISED THE TARIFF ISSUE. GRANT HAS DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION WITH REHFELDT, HOWEVER. REHFELDT'S CONTENTION THAT GRANT WAITED FOR INSTRUCTIONS FROM WASHINGTON PRIOR TO TAKING ACTION IS NOT ACCURATE AS INDICATED BY ACTIONS DESCRIBED PARA 1 OF REF (B) OF WHICH REHFELDT AWARE. REHFELDT ON HIS RETURN FROM WASHINGTON IN SEPTEMBER SAID COMMERCE (KLEIN) MAD A NEW INSTRUCTION ON HIS DESK AND WOULD BE SENDING IT MOMENTARILY. GRANT DID SAY HE HAD NOT RECEIVED A NEW INSTRUCTION SUCH AS THAT DESCRIBED BY REHFELDT.

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3. THE EMBASSY IS SYMPATHETIC WITH LAI FU'S PROBLEM

AND WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS ON REHFELDT'S BEHALF. THE CASE IS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF THE GROC DESIRE TO PROTECT LOCAL COLOR TV PRODUCERS AS WELL AS ITS AUSTERITY POLICY AIMED AT DECREASING DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION OF IMPORTED LUXURY CONSUMER GOODS. THESE FACTS HAVE BEEN RELATED TO MR. REHFELDT A NUMBER OF TIMES BY COMMERCE (SEE LAWRENCE FOX LETTER OF JULY 2, 1975), STATE (SEE BURTON LEVIN LETTER OF JUNE 2, 1975), AND THE EMBASSY, THOUGH HE IS UNDERSTANDABLY RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THEM.

4. THE LAI FU CASE IS ONLY A PART OF THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF EXTREMELY HIGH TARIFFS, SOME OVER 100 PERCENT, ON A BROAD RANGE OF CONSUMER GOODS. WHILE MANY OF THE TARIFFS ARE AIMED AT THE JAPANESE, THEY EFFECTIVELY CLOSE THE MARKET TO US EXPORTERS AS WELL. UNDER EXISTING CONDITIONS IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO GAIN MEANINGFUL RELIEF. HOWEVER, WE WILL PERSIST IN PRESSING FOR REDUCTIONS, HOPEFULLY WITH GREATER SUCCESS, AS THE ECONOMY STRENGTHENS AND AS THE ROC BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SITUATION IMPROVES.
UNGER

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